

Nickel, dollar fetch \$693,000 at auction

By Roger Boye

The hit parade of high-priced rarities has grown again with the recent sale of two prized collectibles at public auction.

An Austin, Tex., hobbyist paid \$385,000 for one of five-known 1913 Liberty-head nickels, and an Omaha dealer paid \$308,000 for an 1804 silver dollar. Both pieces were owned by Los Angeles businessman Jerry H. Buss.

To date, 12 coins minted in the United States have fetched more than \$300,000 each in auction sales. The record price of \$725,000 went for a 1787 gold "Brasher doubloon" sold about 5½ years ago near the peak of the market boom.

The Buss sale in late January attracted more than 200 hobby pros to a hotel near Los Angeles. Winning bidders paid \$3.99 million for about 2,300 of Buss' coins, but the two kingpin rarities got most of the headlines.

Buss made a nice profit on both coins, having spent \$200,000 for the nickel in 1978 and the same amount for the silver dollar a year later. But he wasn't so lucky with his 1894-S dime, another auction rarity. Actress Michelle Johnson spent \$50,600 for it in the sale, less than half of what Buss paid to buy the coin in 1979.

Buss told reporters for hobby newspapers that he decided to sell his collection because he could not devote enough time to working on it. He still owns three professional sports teams and a massive hoard of sports memorabilia.

● Uncle Sam is selling Susan B. Anthony dollar coins by mail to satisfy collector demand.

Nearly 870 million Susie B's were made between 1979 and 1981 in an experiment that flopped. Officials had hoped that the coin might replace \$1 bills someday, but people shunned the Susie B, in part because of its similarity to the quarter.

To assure widespread distribution among coin enthusiasts, the United States Mint finally has decided to offer sets containing the six dollars made for circulation. Each plastic-sealed set contains 1979- and 1980-dated "uncirculated specimens" from the Philadelphia, Denver and San Francisco mints [1981-dated Susie B's were made for special proof and uncirculated coin sets rather than for circulation].

To order, send a check or money order for \$10 a set to the United States Mint, P.O. Box 500, Philadelphia, Pa. 19105. Allow at least six weeks for delivery.